

JUVENAL



(Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, Late First through Early Second Century A.D.)

Satire is entirely Roman. The first to win distinction in satire was Lucilius, who still has admirers who unhesitatingly prefer him not just to other satirists but to all poets regardless of genre. I disagree with them, but equally I disagree with Horace, who thinks that Lucilius “flows along like a muddy stream, with much in his poems that could well be cut out”. For Lucilius is admirably learned and outspoken, and this makes him so sharp-tongued and full of wit. Horace is much more refined and polished, and unless I am misled by my affection for him, he is the best of all the satirists. Persius has also earned a considerable reputation, though he wrote just one book. And there are other distinguished satirists writing nowadays, whose lasting reputation is assured.

THIS IS QUINTILIAN’S ASSESSMENT OF SATIRE IN HIS SURVEY OF GREEK AND ROMAN literature at the beginning of the tenth book of his *Education of the Orator*. He was writing in the 90s A.D., at least a decade before the publication of Juvenal’s earliest satires, so he can name only the three older members of the great quartet of Roman satirists.

Gaius Lucilius, from Suessa Aurunca, not far south of Rome, on the border between Latium and Campania, may have been born as early as 180, and he lived until 102 or 101 B.C. He was rich, a member of the equestrian order, a great-uncle of Pompey, and a friend of Scipio Aemilianus, the conqueror of Carthage. He was immensely productive, publishing thirty books of satires. Unfortunately, fewer than 1,400 lines survive. This is not an insubstantial total (Horace has 2,112 lines in his satires, Persius 665, Juvenal 3,869), but they give us a very incomplete picture of Lucilius’s writings because they consist almost entirely of brief and disparate quotations of a few words or lines, with none longer than 13 lines, and a great number of them are preserved by grammarians as illustrations of

linguistic peculiarities, with little or no indication of the context from which they are being drawn.

Even with such unpromising evidence, it is possible to deduce that Lucilius wrote on a wide range of topics: politics, philosophy, morals, literary criticism, language, and anecdotes about his own life and that of contemporaries. Unlike the later satirists, he did not restrict himself to writing only in hexameters: in his earlier books he employed a variety of meters, apparently in imitation of the *Saturae* of Ennius, who is much better known for his epic and tragic poetry. The loss of Lucilius's satires is very regrettable, not only because we get only tantalizing glimpses of his earthy and candid opinions on so many aspects of life, shot through with a particularly strong vein of humor, often at his own expense, but also because he was such a prominent figure in a crucial transitional period of Rome's history that is so little known to us.

Being rich and well-connected, Lucilius was able to direct stringent attacks against high-status individuals, but, for all his great reputation for outspokenness, it has been suggested that at least some of his victims were safely dead before he published his criticism of them. When Horace wrote his *Satires* in the 30s B.C., he felt that, as a son of an ex-slave, he could not risk offending rich and powerful contemporaries. He preferred "to tell the truth with a laugh," comparing himself to a teacher coaxing children to learn their alphabet by giving them little cakes (1.1.24–26). Such "joking in earnest" was a standard practice in the teachings of the Greek philosophical schools, not just the Epicureans, to whom Horace professed adherence, but also the Cynics and Stoics, and Horace derived much of his subject matter from the philosophers' diatribes against moral weaknesses.

In *Satires* 1.4, Horace criticizes Lucilius for writing two hundred lines in an hour while standing on one leg, and goes on to make the comparison of Lucilius to a muddy stream that Quintilian cites (see above). Horace himself had espoused the Callimachean view that poetry should be written slowly, on a small scale, and with great care. It will have been particularly challenging for him to adhere to these principles, given that he adopted such a loose, informal style. (Horace called his satires *Sermones*, which means "conversations," with none of the implication of lecturing inherent in the English word "sermon.") *Satires* 1.8 is a splendid example of

Callimacheanism, despite its rather improbable subject matter. The speaker is a cheap fig-wood statue of Priapus, the god assigned the responsibility of keeping thieves and birds out of gardens. When he saw two witches carrying out magic rites at night, he was so terrified that he farted with such force that his buttocks split, and the witches ran off in a panic, the one losing her false teeth, the other her wig. The anecdote is highly comic, but it is also structured as an *aetion*, an “explanation,” in the Callimachean manner. Several fragments of Callimachus’s great poem, the *Aetia*, concern statues of various deities; we may note in particular fragment 114, where the poet is in conversation with a statue of Delian Apollo, asking why he is represented as he is. Only the opening words of his ninth *Iamb* survive, addressed to a statue of Hermes: “Long-bearded Hermes, why does your penis point to your beard and not to your feet ... ?” Horace’s poem is set in the magnificent gardens recently laid out on the Esquiline by Maecenas. We may imagine them strolling together there and coming across a little statue of the ithyphallic god Priapus that had been split, no doubt by the summer heat. Rather than address Maecenas with fulsome praise for his generosity in tidying up the Esquiline, which had been a dangerous and run-down part of the city, Horace flatters his patron with this oblique compliment, presenting him with a fancifully humorous etiological poem purporting to relate how the statue’s buttocks came to split.

Persius was born in A.D. 34 and died in 62. He came from a very rich and well-connected family in Tuscany and had close contacts with the Stoic opposition to Nero, all of whom were to suffer enforced suicide or banishment a few years after his premature death, men such as the philosophers Thrasyllus Paetus and Annaeus Cornutus, as well as Lucan and later on his uncle, the younger Seneca, who did not greatly impress him. According to Suetonius’s brief *Life of Persius*, “when Persius was reciting his poetry, Lucan could hardly restrain himself from declaring Persius’s poems to be real poetry whereas his own were mere playthings.” His first satire discusses literary fashions, and the other five deal with particular topics drawn from Stoic doctrines. This ensured that his poetry retained a greater currency than that of most pagan poets after the onset of Christianity. Persius’s poems are consequently preserved in an unusually large number of manuscripts, dating from as early as the seventh century.

He does not, however, enjoy great popularity nowadays, partly because of his deliberately difficult style and partly because the discussions of morality in which he engages have only a limited appeal.

The other satirists draw frequently on their own lives for material for their poetry. In this respect there is a marked contrast with Juvenal, who, especially in his earlier satires, delivers diatribes against society in general, with little or no reference to himself personally. We do not know when or where he was born or died, or what his social status was. He lived through the increasingly vicious reign of Domitian, but, from the very few datable references within his poems, it is reasonable to suppose that he did not begin writing satires until about A.D. 106, that is to say, a decade after Domitian's assassination. The last book may not have been published much before A.D. 130.

Martial addresses three epigrams to Juvenal, but the latest can be dated to A.D. 101/102, and none of them hint that he was active as a poet. No other contemporary mentions Juvenal, and allusions to his poetry remain very sparse for more than two centuries after his death. Packed though they are with obscenities, his denunciations of Roman decadence and corruption appealed to the early Church Fathers, and this rather paradoxically gave him a great popularity that he seems not to have enjoyed in his lifetime, and that has not waned since. Because he is almost totally silent about himself, and had apparently been neglected for so long, there was no reliable source of information about his life to satisfy this new interest in Juvenal. As so often with literary figures, biographical details were cobbled together from his own poems to fill this vacuum. We have a broad range of information about Juvenal generated this way, but it is all probably quite unfounded. For example, there is no persuasive substance to the notion that he was exiled to a military post in the remote south of Egypt as punishment for mocking Domitian's baldness (at 4.38); this is concocted from his fifteenth satire, a curious tale of cannibalism in Egypt, and from the fragmentary sixteenth, about soldiering.

When we read the damning indictments of the imperial system by Juvenal's contemporary Tacitus, we are always aware that they were written by a leading senator whose survival had once depended on his passive acquiescence in the dreadful excesses of the last years of Domitian's reign.

We can sense the passionate power of the outrage to which he could finally give expression. Rather paradoxically, the force of Juvenal's denunciations of Rome seems to be enhanced by our ignorance of his position in society. Since we can only speculate about his motivation for making them and about his personal perspective on life, his diatribes seem to have a peculiarly universal application.

Roman poets frequently remind their readers that their poems do not necessarily reflect their personality. Juvenal may, in real life, have been mild-mannered and broad-minded, with a sunny disposition and a charitable respect for all humanity, but the voice in which he speaks, especially in his earlier satires, suggests that he was an appalling xenophobe and misogynist, spiteful and intolerant, incapable of seeing anything but the worst in everyone. This odious and twisted persona, however, should not blind us to his literary greatness. Few critics would question his status as the author of some of the most magnificent poetry any Roman or, for that matter, Greek ever wrote. That Juvenal could raise satire to such heights is surprising. The genre had come a long way from Horace's assessment of it in, for example, *Satires* 1.4, where he criticizes Lucilius's lack of artistry and, with rather overstated modesty, denies himself a place among the ranks of poets because he writes "things closer to conversation." Juvenal's use of meter is in many respects more comparable to that of Virgil than to that of the other satirists, and it also contributes to his high stylistic level that he generally avoids colloquial and vulgar language. For example, he frequently refers to sex and bodily functions in an open and vigorous manner, but he rarely uses obscene terms in doing so.

This grand style suits Juvenal's sweeping excoriation of all he sees around him. Horace might quite properly adopt an informal tone when he tells the gentle fable of the town mouse and the country mouse (*Satires* 2.6.80–117) to contrast the drawbacks of a luxurious city life with the attractions of a quiet country life, but that would not suit Juvenal's attack on life in Rome in *Satire* 3, a remorseless catalog of intemperate invective against tricksters, flatterers, blackmailers, Jews, Greeks, Syrians, the rich, patrons, squalid and overcrowded living conditions, muggers, and much more besides. (Juvenal's xenophobia is spectacular, a feature of his poetry that strikes modern readers with particular immediacy. It is not, however,

universal—he expresses no prejudice against Gauls, Spaniards, and Africans, but he repeatedly attacks the Jews, Egyptians, and Greeks who are taking over Rome. Does this selective discrimination make it worse?) Horace’s poem focuses on the unassuming pleasures of the countryside rather than the dangerous splendors of the city, but even in praising rural life Juvenal can turn it into a criticism of Rome: one of the good things about the countryside is that the only occasion when the cumbersome and inconvenient toga has to be worn is at one’s own funeral. When Martial compares his own happy life in retirement in a quiet Spanish country town with the tiresome obligations of life in Rome, he pictures Juvenal sweating in his toga up and down the hills of Rome to pay his respects to patrons, whereas he himself wears anything that happens to come to hand (*Epigrams* 12.18; see p. 441).

Juvenal’s shift from the relaxed, conversational style conventionally adopted by the other satirists is a result of the highly rhetorical nature of his poetry. Both the content of his satires and its presentation are heavily influenced by contemporary education in, and practice of, oratory. This can be seen both in small details and in the general themes and overall structure of his satires. It is often said that Juvenal is eminently quotable. His poems are full of brief and memorable phrases: “Honesty is praised and left to shiver” (1.74, on the lack of moral standards); “A rare bird in the world and very like a black swan” (6.165, a perfect woman); “Who will guard the guards themselves?” (6 Oxford fragment 31, on chaperones conniving at women’s sexual escapades); “Bread and circuses” (10.81, the only things the Roman people are interested in nowadays); “A healthy mind in a healthy body” (10.356, the only thing for which we should pray). Others are more specifically dependent on their context and merit quotation in Latin to emphasize their well-crafted terseness: *ipse capi voluit*, “It itself wanted to be caught” (4.69, a court flatterer’s comment on the privilege a fish enjoys in being served to Domitian); *hoc volo, sic iubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*, “This is what I want, thus I command, let my wish stand instead of reason” (6.223, a domineering wife). Such pointed brevity is at least partly derived from the *sententiae*, the pithy and telling phrases with which rhetors packed their declamations.

Juvenal's first satire is programmatic, announcing what he is going to write and why and how he is going to write it. Having put up for so long with unending recitations of tedious poetry, he is going to try it for himself. His choice of genre is inevitable: with all the iniquities in Rome, "it's hard *not* to write satire" (30), and it is not even necessary to have any real talent, because "if nature fails, then indignation generates verse" (79). In the following lines, Juvenal seems to acknowledge that satire is not traditionally restricted to attacking moral corruption: "What folks have done ever since [the primordial Flood]—their hopes and fears and anger, / their pleasures, joys, and toing and froing—is my volume's hotch-potch" (85–86). In the very next line, however, he shows that he is not actually interested in any of the more pleasant and innocuous aspects of life: "Was there, at any time, a richer harvest of evil?"

As a model for such aggressive satire, Juvenal naturally turns to Lucilius:

Whenever, as though with sword in hand, the hot Lucilius
roars in wrath, the listener flushes; his mind is affrighted
with a sense of sin, and his conscience sweats with secret guilt. (165–67)

He had already mentioned Lucilius driving the chariot of his poetry (19–20), but Horace is referred to only once, and very perfunctorily (51). Juvenal could hardly ignore entirely such a great exponent of the genre. In his first satire, however, Horace had declared that the purpose of his satires was "to tell the truth with a laugh" (24), and Juvenal, as a master of the vitriolic, the intolerant, and the unreasonable, would want to maintain his distance from a predecessor who aimed to coax and banter his readers out of their faults and foibles. Juvenal occasionally imitates Persius in detail, but he never mentions him. With his humane, positive, and constructive mission in writing his satires, Persius would have suited Juvenal's outlook and style even less than did Horace.

Unlike Lucilius, Juvenal cannot risk attacks on the living: "I'll try what I may against those/whose ashes are buried beneath the Flaminia and the Latina" (171–72). This final statement may be simply an acknowledgment that the days of Republican freedom of speech are long gone, but it may also indicate that Juvenal is not writing with the security that a high social status could afford him. Throughout his satires we come across the names

of people who will have been easily familiar to his contemporaries. To the modern reader, however, the majority are otherwise unknown. To identify them, we need to consult learned commentaries. Even then, many of the references remain obscure. This is hardly surprising, given that even the scholia to Juvenal's poetry written in late antiquity felt it necessary to devote substantial space to this problem. But, many such individuals are introduced as representative of a particular type of person: all we really need to know about, for example, Crispinus (1.27) is that he is an unlikable Egyptian; about Matho (1.32), that he is a fat lawyer; about Proculeius and Gillo (1.40), that they have, respectively, a small penis and a large one.

It is important to remember that Juvenal's first satire introduces only the first book. By convention, his sixteen satires are numbered consecutively, but it is generally accepted that he published them at intervals, in five books: 1 through 5 (Why write satire?; homosexuality; life in Rome; decadence at Domitian's court; patronage); 6 (women); 7 through 9 (the poverty of intellectuals; the shortcomings of the aristocracy; life as a bisexual gigolo); 10 through 12 (what to pray for; the simple life; friendship); 13 through 16 (consolation for loss; parental influence; cannibalism in Egypt; the army). The program announced in the first satire fits perfectly with the warped aggression of the second book just as well as it suits the first book, for Juvenal has nothing good to say about modern women. In Book 3, however, a rather disconcerting shift in tone begins to creep in. *Satire* 8 gives hints at positive advice, even if only through the use of examples not to be followed. This technique recurs more emphatically in *Satire* 10, which is dominated by its vignettes of things that seem worth praying for but lead to disaster: political power, eloquence, military glory, long life, beauty. It is perhaps ironic that, for all that he is such an expert at devastating criticism, the most famous phrase in Juvenal is strongly positive: "you ought to pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body [*mens sana in corpore sano*]" (10.356). Juvenal adopts a more Horatian persona in the later books, perhaps not surprisingly, since he turns, from *Satire* 9 on, to issues of private morality rather than the evils of society in general. The later books are more mellow, with Juvenal deploying less indignation and more irony, but they are also arguably less successful. He has only a

mediocre talent for being reasonable. Many readers prefer the sweeping and detestable virulence of his earlier satires.

SATIRE 1

Why Write Satire?

In the introductory lines (1–21), Juvenal situates his complaints about contemporary Rome in the context of literary society, in which frequent recitations were given by second-rate writers, like Codrus who wrote an epic on the Seven against Thebes and the authors of other mythological epics. Much of this poetry was informed by the common background of the rhetorical schools, which Juvenal had also attended, where students gave imaginary speeches of advice to famous men, such as Sulla. He ends by invoking the inventor of Roman satire, Gaius Lucilius, who was born in Suessa Aurunca in southern Italy.

Must I be always a listener only, never hit back,
although so often assailed by the hoarse *Theseid* of Codrus?
Never obtain revenge when X has read me his comedies,
Y his elegies? No revenge when my day has been wasted
by mighty Telephus or by Orestes who, having covered
the final margin, extends to the back, and still isn't finished?
No citizen's private house is more familiar to him
than the grove of Mars and Vulcan's cave near Aeolus' rocks
are to me; what the winds are up to, what ghosts are being
tormented

10 on Aeacus' rack, from what far land another has stolen
a bit of gold pelt, how huge are the ash-trunks Monychus hurls—
the unending cry goes up from Fronto's plane-trees, his marble
statues and columns, shaken and shattered by non-stop readings.

One gets the same from every poet, great and small.
I too have snatched my hand from under the cane; I too
have tendered advice to Sulla to retire from public life
and sleep the sleep of the just. No point, when you meet so many
bards, in sparing paper (it's already doomed to destruction).
But why, you may ask, should I decide to cover the ground
20 o'er which the mighty son of Aurunca drove his team?
If you have time and are feeling receptive, here's my answer.

The subject turns to the excesses of Roman society, including women, like Mevia, taking up male pursuits; a barber becoming wealthy; and an Egyptian like Crispinus advising the emperor. Under Domitian, Massa, Carus, and Latinus were notorious informers, whose crimes justify the turn to satire, now represented by Horace, who was born in Venusia (51). After listing further outrages that recall the activities of a famous early imperial poisoner, Lucusta, Juvenal, with false modesty, invokes another, entirely unknown writer of satire, Cluvienus.

When a soft eunuch marries, and Mevia takes to sticking
a Tuscan boar, with a spear beside her naked breast,
when a fellow who made my stiff young beard crunch with his
clippers
can challenge the whole upper class with his millions, single-
handed;
when Crispinus, a blob of Nilotic scum, bred in Canopus,
hitches a cloak of Tyrian purple onto his shoulder
and flutters a simple ring of gold on his sweaty finger
(in summer he cannot bear the weight of a heavy stone),
30 it's hard not to write satire. For who could be so inured
to the wicked city, so dead to feeling, as to keep his temper

when the brand-new litter of Matho the lawyer heaves in sight,
filled with himself; then one who informed on a powerful friend
and will soon be tearing what's left of the carcass of Rome's
aristocracy,

one who makes even Massa shiver, whom Carus caresses
with bribes, and Thymele too, sent by the frightened Latinus;
when you're shouldered aside by people who earn bequests at
night,

people who reach the top by a form of social climbing
that now ensures success—through a rich old female's funnel?

40 Proculeius obtains a single twelfth, but Gillo eleven:
each heir's reward is assessed by the size of his organ.

Very well. Let each receive the price of his life-blood, becoming
as pale as a man who has stepped on a snake in his bare feet,
or is waiting to speak in the contest at the grim altar of Lyons.

Why need I tell how my heart shrivels in the heat of its anger,
when townsfolk are jostled by the flocks attending on one who
has cheated

his ward and left him to prostitution, or on someone condemned
by a futile verdict? For what is disgrace if he keeps the money?

The exiled Marius drinks from two, happily braving

50 the wrath of heaven; the province which won is awarded—tears.

Am I not right to think this calls for Venusia's lamp?

Am I not right to attack it? Would you rather I reeled off epics of
Heracles

or Diomedes or the labyrinth's frantic bellows,

the splash of the youngster hitting the sea, and the flying joiner,
when a pimp, if his wife is barred from benefit, coolly pockets

the gifts brought by her lover, trained to stare at the ceiling,
trained to snore in his cups through a nose that's wide awake;
when this man feels entitled to covet command of a cohort,
no longer possessing a family fortune, having presented
60 every cent to the stables—look at Automedon junior
as he flies along the Flaminia, whipping the horses and holding
the reins himself, swanking in front of his girl in her greatcoat.
There, at the intersection, wouldn't you like to fill
a large-size notebook when a figure comes by on six pairs of
shoulders
in a litter exposed on this side and that and almost indecent,
recalling in many ways the limp and sprawling Maecenas,
a forger of wills who has turned himself into a wealthy
gentleman
with the simple aid of a sheet of paper and a moistened signet?
Here is a high-born lady, who just before handing her husband
70 some mellow Calenian adds a dash of shriveling toad.
Surpassing Lucusta herself, she trains untutored neighbors
to brave the scandal and walk behind their blackened lords.
If you want to be anything, dare some deed that merits
confinement
on Gyara's narrow shore; honesty is praised, and shivers.
Crime pays—look at those grounds and mansions and tables,
the antique silver, and the goat perched on the rim of the cup.
Who can sleep when a daughter-in-law is seduced for money,
when brides-to-be are corrupt, and schoolboys practise adultery?
If nature fails, then indignation generates verse,

80 doing the best it can, like mine or like Cluvienus’.

Juvenal announces the subject of satire—human nature as it has been since the recreation of the human race by Deucalion and Pyrrha. As he portrays it, the wealth acquired by former slaves such as Pallas and Licinus is emblematic of the degradation of traditional Roman culture, which is represented by Corvinus, a Roman noble reduced to working as a sharecropper.

Once, when torrents of rain were raising the ocean’s level,
Deucalion sailed to the top of a hill and sought for guidance.
Little by little the stones grew warm and soft with life,
and Pyrrha displayed her naked girls to the gaze of men.
What folks have done ever since—their hopes and fears and
 anger,
their pleasures, joys, and toing and froing—is my volume’s
 hotch-potch.

Was there, at any time, a richer harvest of evil?

When did the pocket of greed gape wider? When was our dicing
ever so reckless? Your gambler leaves his wallet behind
90 as he goes to the table of chance; he plays with his safe at his
 elbow!

There what battles are to be seen, with the banker supplying
the weaponry! Is it just simple madness to lose a hundred
thousand, and then refuse a shirt to a shivering slave?

Which of our grandfathers built so many villas, or dined off
seven courses, alone? Today a little ‘basket’
waits in the porch, to be snatched away by the toga’d rabble.
First, however, the steward anxiously peers at your face

for fear you may be an impostor using another's name.
No dole until you are checked. The crier is ordered to call
100 even the Trojan families; they too besiege the portals
along with us: 'See to the praetor, then to the tribune'.
A freedman's in front: 'I was here first,' he says, 'why shouldn't I
stand my ground, without any fear or uneasiness? Granted,
I was born beside the Euphrates (the fancy holes in my ear-lobes
would prove it, whatever I said); but the five boutiques that I own
bring in four hundred thousand. What use is the broader purple,
if while Corvinus is tending the flocks which someone has leased
him
out in the Laurentine country, I have a bigger fortune
than Pallas or Licinus?' So, just let the tribunes wait;
110 let wealth prevail; no deference is due to their sacred office
from one who recently came to the city with whitened feet.
In our society nothing is held in such veneration
as the grandeur of riches, although as yet there stands no temple
for accursed Money to dwell in, no altar erected to Cash,
in the way we honor Peace, Good Faith, Victory, Valor,
and Concord, who when her nest is hailed replies with a clatter.

Juvenal now turns to the social ills that he attributes to the system of patronage in Rome: even the consul, the highest magistrate, is a client of someone higher up. Clients make the rounds, fishing for handouts and a free dinner (the transition is somewhat obscured by the loss of a line in the text). But greed and gluttony prevail, and the wealthy magnate indulges himself in private.

When the highest magistrate reckons up, at the end of the year,

what the 'basket' is worth, how much it adds to his assets,
what of his clients, who count on that for their clothes and
footwear,

120 bread and fuel for their houses? The litters are jammed together
as they come for their hundred pieces. A sick or pregnant wife
follows behind her husband, and is carted round the circuit.
This man claims, with a well-known ruse, for an absent spouse.
Indicating an empty chair with its curtains drawn,
'That's my Galla,' he says. 'Don't keep her too long. Are you
worried?

Galla, put out your head.'

'Leave her, she must be sleeping.'

The day itself is arranged in a splendid series of highlights:

'The basket', then the city square, with Apollo the lawyer
and the generals' statues—one, which some Egyptian wallah

130 has had the nerve to set up, listing all his achievements;
pissing (and worse) against his image is wholly in order.

.....

Weary old clients trudge away from the porches, resigning
what they had yearned for, though nothing stays with a man so
long

as the hope of a dinner. Cabbage and kindling have to be
purchased.

Meanwhile the magnate will lounge alone among empty couches,
chewing his way through the finest produce of sea and woodland.

(Yes, off all those antique tables, so wide and so stylish,
they gobble up their ancestors' wealth at a single sitting.)

Soon there'll be no parasites left. But who could abide

140 that blend of luxury and meanness? What size of gullet could
 order
a whole boar for itself, an animal born for parties?
But a reckoning is nigh, when you strip and, within that bloated
 body,
carry an undigested peacock into the bath-house.
That's why sudden death is common, and old age rare.
At once the joyful news goes dancing around the dinners.
The funeral cortege departs to the cheers of indignant friends.
There'll be no scope for new generations to add to our record
of rottenness; they will be just the same in their deeds and
 desires.
Every evil has reached a precipice. Up with the sail, then;
crowd on every stitch of canvas.

In this closing passage, Juvenal justifies his turn to satire, responding to an imaginary interlocutor who longs for a talented satirist as in the old days, when one could name names. Nowadays, however, if you make fun of the likes of Tigillinus, Nero's abusive praetorian prefect, you will end up burned at the stake. Better, he warns, to write mythological epics about Aeneas, or Achilles, or Hercules and the boy Hylas. Juvenal's abrupt response is that his satires will target only dead victims, whose ashes reside in their family tombs along prominent Roman roads, like the Via Flaminia or the Via Latina.

 Perhaps you may say 'But,
150 where is the talent fit for the theme? Where is the frankness
of earlier days which allowed men to write whatever they pleased
with burning passion ("Whose name do I not dare mention?
What does it matter if Mucius forgives what I say or not?")?

Portray Tigellinus; soon you will blaze as a living torch,
standing with others, smoking and burning, pinned by the throat,
driving a vivid pathway of light across the arena.'

So take this man who administered poison to three of his uncles

—

is he to go by, looking down on us all from his aery cushions?

160 'Yes, when he comes to you, seal your lips with your finger.
Simply to utter the words "That's him!" will count as informing.
Without a qualm you can pit Aeneas against the ferocious
Rutulian; no one is placed at risk by the wounded Achilles,
or Hylas, so long sought when he'd gone the way of his bucket.
Whenever, as though with sword in hand, the hot Lucilius
roars in wrath, the listener flushes; his mind is affrighted
with a sense of sin, and his conscience sweats with secret guilt.
That's what causes anger and tears. So turn it over
in your mind before the bugle. Too late, when you've donned
your helmet,

170 for second thoughts about combat.'

'I'll try what I may against those
whose ashes are buried beneath the Flaminia and the Latina.'

SATIRE 10

The Futility of Aspirations

This poem is a systematic exposition of the things that people pray for, both the wrong things and the right ones, so it concludes on a more positive note than many of Juvenal's satires. In the introductory section (1–55), he remarks on the propensity of humans to pray for eloquence, strength, or

wealth, a folly that would provoke the philosopher Democritus to laughter (he was the author of the book On Cheerfulness), while the more melancholy Heraclitus would be moved to tears. The concluding lines mark the transition to the two major sections of the poem on the subject of what people do pray for, and the things for which they actually should pray.

In all the countries that stretch from Cadiz across to the Ganges
and the lands of dawn, how few are the people who manage to
tell

genuine blessings from those of a very different order,
dispelling the mists of error! For when do we have good grounds
for our fears or desires? What idea proves so inspired that you do
not

regret your attempt to carry it out, and its realization?

The gods, in response to the prayers of the owners, obligingly
wreck

entire households. In peace and in war alike, we beg
for things that will hurt us. To many the art of speaking is fatal,
and their own torrential fluency. In a famous instance, an athlete
met his end through trusting in his strength and his marvellous
muscles.

10

More, however, are smothered by heaps of money, amassed
with excessive care, and by fortunes exceeding other men's
wealth

by as much as the giant British whale outgrows the dolphin.
Hence it was, in those terrible times, that on Nero's orders
Longinus' house and the over-rich Seneca's spacious park
were closed, and the Lateran family's splendid mansion besieged
by an entire company. A soldier rarely enters an attic.

20 When you make a journey by night, if you carry even a handful
of plain silver items, you will go in fear of the sword
and barge-pole; you will quake at the shadow of a reed that sways
in the moonlight.

The traveler with nothing on him sings in the robber's face.

As a rule, the first prayer offered, and the one that is most
familiar

in every temple, is 'money': 'let my wealth increase,' 'let my
strong box

be the biggest of all down town.' But aconite never is drunk
from an earthenware mug; that is something to fear when you're
handed

a jeweled cup, or when Serine glows in a golden wine-bowl.

In view of that, you may well approve of the two philosophers:

one of them used to laugh whenever he closed the door

30 and stepped into the street; his opposite number would weep.

While harsh censorious laughter is universal and easy,

one wonders how the other's eyes were supplied with moisture.

Democritus' sides would shake with gales of incessant laughter,
although in the towns of his day there were no purple-or scarlet-
bordered

togas to be seen; no rods or litters or platforms.

What *would* he have made of a praetor standing there in his car,

lifted high in the air amid the dust of the race-track,

dressed in the tunic of Jove himself, with a curtain-like toga

of Tyrian embroidery draped on his shoulders, and a crown so
enormous

40 in its circumference that no neck could support its weight;

in fact it is held by a public slave who sweats with exertion.
(He rides in the same chariot to restrain the official from hybris.)
And don't forget the bird that is perched on his ivory staff,
on this side trumpeters, on that a train of dutiful clients
walking in front, and the snow-white Romans beside his bridle
who have been transformed into friends by the dole thrust into
their purses.

In his day too, in all the places where people gathered,
he found material for laughter. He showed by his excellent sense
that men of the highest quality who will set the finest examples
50 may be born in a land with a thick climate, peopled by
boneheads.

He used to laugh at the masses' worries, and at their pleasures,
and sometimes, too, at their tears. For himself, when Fortune
threatened,
he would tell her go hang, and make a sign with his middle
finger.

So what in fact are the useless or dangerous things that are
sought,
for which one must duly cover the knees of the gods with wax?

In this, the longest section of the poem (56–345), Juvenal catalogs the things that people pray for, in spite of their disastrous consequences. He describes first (56–113) how they ask the gods for power, taking as an example the fate of Sejanus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard under the emperor Tiberius. Sejanus schemed for power but was undone when Tiberius denounced him to the Senate in a letter sent from the imperial retreat on the island of Capri.

Some are sent hurtling down by the virulent envy to which

their power exposes them. Their long and impressive list of
achievements

ruins them. Down come their statues, obeying the pull of the
rope.

Thereupon, axe-blows rain on the very wheels of their chariots,
60 smashing them up; and the legs of the innocent horses are
broken.

Now the flames are hissing; bellows and furnace are bringing
a glow to the head revered by the people. The mighty Sejanus
is crackling. Then, from the face regarded as number two
in the whole of the world, come pitchers, basins, saucepans, and
piss-pots.

Frame your door with laurels; drag a magnificent bull,
whitened with chalk, to the Capitol. They're dragging Sejanus
along

by a hook for all to see. Everyone's jubilant. 'Look,
what lips he had! What a face! You can take it from me that I
never

cared for the fellow. But what was the charge that brought him
down?

70 Who informed, who gave him away, what witnesses proved it?'
'Nothing like that. A large, long-winded letter arrived
from Capri.'

'Fine ... I ask no more.'

But what's the reaction
of Remus' mob? It supports the winner, as always, and turns on
whoever is condemned. If Nortia had smiled on her Tuscan
favorite,

if the elderly prince had been caught off guard and sent to his

death,
that same public, at this very moment, would be hailing Sejanus
as Augustus. Long ago, the people cast off its worries,
when we stopped selling our votes. A body that used to confer
commands, legions, rods, and everything else, has now
80 narrowed its scope, and is eager and anxious for two things only:
bread and races.

‘I hear that a lot are going to die.’

‘No question about it. The kitchen is sure to be hot.’

‘My friend

Bruttidius looked a bit pale when I met him beside Mars’ altar.
I’ve an awful feeling that the mortified Ajax may take revenge
for being exposed to danger. So now, as he lies by the river,
let’s all run and kick the man who was Caesar’s enemy.
But check that our slaves are watching; then no one can say we
didn’t,
and drag his terrified master to court with his head in a noose.’

Such were the whispers and the common gossip concerning
Sejanus.

90 Do *you* want to be greeted each morning, as Sejanus was;
to possess his wealth; to bestow on one a magistrate’s chair,
to appoint another to an army command; to be seen as the
guardian
of Rome’s chief, as he sits on the narrow Rock of the Roedeers
with his herd of Chaldaeans? Of course you would like to have
spears and cohorts,
the cream of the knights, and a barracks as part of your house.

Why shouldn't you
want them? For even people with no desire to kill
covet the power. But what is the good of prestige and prosperity
if, for every joy, they bring an equal sorrow?
Would you sooner wear the bordered robe of the man that you
see there

100 being dragged along, or be a power in Fidenae or Gabii,
adjudicating on weights and quantities, or a ragged aedile
smashing undersize measuring cups in empty Ulúbrae?
You acknowledge, then, that Sejanus never succeeded in grasping
what one should really pray for. By craving ever more honors
and seeking ever more wealth, he was building a lofty tower
of numerous storeys; which meant that the fall would be all the
greater,
and that when the structure gave way, its collapse would wreak
devastation.

What cast down the likes of Pompey and Crassus, and him
who tamed the people of Rome and brought them under the lash?
110 It was the pursuit of the highest place by every device,
and grandiose prayers, which were duly heard by malevolent
gods.

Few monarchs go down to Ceres' son-in-law free from
bloody wounds; few tyrants avoid a sticky death.

Public speakers wielded great influence in Roman affairs, so it is not surprising that men might pray to the gods for eloquence such as was displayed by the fourth-century B.C. Athenian orator Demosthenes or Rome's own Cicero (114–32). And yet Cicero would have been better off if he had only been known to posterity as a mediocre poet.

Glorious eloquence, such as Demosthenes and Cicero had that
is desired from the start, and through Minerva's vacation,
by the youngster who worships the thrifty goddess, as yet with a
coin,
and who has a slave in attendance to mind his diminutive satchel.
Yet eloquence proved the undoing of both those statesmen; and
both
were carried to ruin by the large and copious flood of their
genius.

120 Thanks to his genius, one had his hands and head cut off.
(The rostrum was never stained with a petty advocate's blood.)
'O fortunate state of Rome, which dates from my consulate!'
He could have scorned Mark Antony's swords, had all his sayings
been like that. So—better to write ridiculous poems
than that inspired Philippic (the second one in the set)
which is universally praised. An equally cruel death
removed the man whose fluent power excited the wonder
of Athens, as he used his reins to drive the crowded assembly.
The gods in heaven frowned on his birth, and fate was against
him.

130 His father, with eyes inflamed by the soot of the glowing metal,
sent him away from the coal and tongs, and the anvil that
fashions

swords, and all the filth of Vulcan, to a rhetoric tutor.

Military glory is the third of men's aspirations that leads them to ruin, as exemplified in this section (133–87) by three famous generals: Hannibal, the Carthaginian who crossed the Alps and ravaged Italy in the Second Punic War, only to be reduced to a refugee in Bithynia at the war's end; Alexander the Great, born at Pella in Macedon, who fretted that the world was not big enough for him but learned within Babylon's brick walls that he would die young; and Xerxes, the king of Persia who invaded Greece in 480 B.C. with a vast army and navy, sailing through a channel cut across the Isthmus of Athos, and was ignominiously defeated by the Athenians off the island of Salamis.

The spoils of war—a breastplate nailed to the trunk of a tree
shorn of its branches, a cheekpiece dangling from a shattered
helmet,

a chariot's yoke with its pole snapped off, a pennant ripped
from a crippled warship, a dejected prisoner on top of an arch—
these, it is thought, represent superhuman blessings, and these
are the things that stir a general, be he Greek, Roman, or foreign,
to excitement; they provide a justification for all

140 his toil and peril. So much stronger is the thirst for glory
than for goodness. (Who, in fact, embraces Goodness herself,
if you take away the rewards?) Often states have been ruined
by a few men's greed for fame, by their passion for praise and for
titles

inscribed in the stones protecting their ashes—stones which the
boorish

strength of the barren fig-tree succeeds in splitting apart;
for even funeral monuments have their allotted life-span.

Weigh Hannibal; how many pounds will you find in that mighty
commander? This is the man too big for Africa—a land
which is pounded by the Moorish sea and extends to the
steaming Nile,

150 then south to Ethiopia's tribes and their different elephants.
He annexes Spain to his empire, and dances lightly across
the Pyrenees; then nature bars his path with the snowy Alps;
by vinegar's aid he splits the rocks and shatters the mountains.
Italy now is within his grasp; but he still presses on.
'Nought is achieved,' he cries, 'until I have smashed the gates
with my Punic troops, and raised our flag in the central Subura!'
Lord, what a sight! It would surely have made an amazing
picture:

the one-eyed general riding on his huge Gaetulian beast.
So how does the story end? Alas for glory! Our hero
160 is beaten. He scrambles away into exile, and there he sits
in the hall of the monarch's palace, a great and conspicuous
client,
until it shall please his Bithynian lord to greet the day.
That soul which once convulsed the world will meet its end,
not from a sword, or stones, or spears, but from an object
which, avenging Cannae, will take reprisal for all that bloodshed

—
a ring. Go on, you maniac; charge through the Alpine wastes
to entertain a class of boys and become an oration!
A single world is not enough for the youth of Pella.
He frets and chafes at the narrow limits set by the globe,
170 as though confined on Gyara's rocks or tiny Seriphos.

Yet, when he enters the city that was made secure by its potters,
he will rest content with a coffin. It is only death which reveals
the puny size of human bodies. People believe
that ships once sailed over Athos, and all the lies that Greece
has the nerve to tell in her histories: that the sea was covered with
boats,
and the ocean provided a solid surface for wheels. We believe
deep rivers failed, that streams were all drunk dry by the Persians
at lunch, and whatever Sostratus sings with his soaking pinions.
Yet in what state did the king return on leaving Salamis—
180 the one who would vent his savage rage on Corus and Eurus
with whips, an outrage never endured in Aeolus' cave,
the one who bound the earth-shaking god himself with fetters
(that, indeed, was somewhat mild; why he even considered
he deserved a branding! What god would be slave to a man like
that?)—
yet in what state did he return? In a solitary warship, slowly
pushing its way through the bloody waves which were thick with
corpses.
Such is the price so often claimed by our coveted glory.

People pray for a long life (188–288) even though longevity often brings only decay and misery. This is illustrated by examples from mythology such as Nestor, famous for his length of years, who lived to see his son Antilochus killed at Troy; Peleus, the father of Achilles, who outlived his son; and Priam, king of Troy, who was slaughtered in the destruction of his city. These cases are supported by famous Romans, such as Marius (157–86 B.C.), formerly Rome's great hero who at the age of seventy was obliged to hide in the swamps of Minturnae to escape his enemy Sulla; or Pompey, who survived a serious illness in 50 B.C., only to die two years later after

his defeat by Caesar, when he was treacherously slain in Egypt and his head was cut off.

‘Jupiter, grant me a lengthy life and many a year!’

Whether you are hale or wan, that is your only prayer.

- 190 Yet think of the endless and bitter afflictions that always attend
a long old age. First and foremost, look at the face—
misshapen and hideous beyond recognition; instead of skin,
you see a misshapen hide, baggy cheeks, and the kind
of wrinkles that are etched on the aged jowls of an African ape,
where Thabraca stretches its shady forests along the coast.
Young men vary in numerous ways—A is more handsome
than B and has different features; C is more sturdy than D.
Old men are all alike—trembling in body and voice,
with a pate that is now quite smooth, and the running nose of an
infant.
- 200 The poor old fellow must mumble his bread with toothless gums.
He is so repellent to all (wife, children, and himself),
that he even turns the stomach of Cossus the legacy-hunter.
He loses his former zest for food and wine as his palate
grows numb. He has long forgotten what sex was like; if one tries
to remind him, his shrunken tool, with its vein enlarged, just lies
there,
and, though caressed all night, it will continue to lie there.
As for the future, what can those white-haired ailing organs
hope for? Moreover, the lust that, in spite of impotence, struggles
to gain satisfaction, is rightly suspect. And now consider
- 210 the loss of another faculty. What joy does he get from a singer,

however outstanding, or from the harpist Seleucus and others
who as harpists or pipers always shine in golden mantles?

What does it matter where he sits in the spacious theater,
when he can barely hear the sound of the horns or the fanfare
of trumpets? The slave announcing a caller's arrival or telling
the time is obliged to shout in his ear to make himself heard.

Again, so little blood remains in his chilly veins
that he's only warm when he has a fever. All kinds of ailments
band together and dance around him. If you asked their names

220 I could sooner tell you how many lovers Oppia has taken,
how many patients Themison has killed in a single autumn,
how many partners have been swindled by Basilus, how many
minors

by Hirrus, how many men are drained in a single day
by the tall Maura, how many schoolboys are debauched by
Hamillus.

I could sooner count the country houses now possessed
by the fellow who made my stiff young beard crunch with his
clippers.

Here it's a shoulder crippled, there a pelvis or hip;
this man has lost both eyes, and envies the fellow with one;
that takes food with bloodless lips from another's fingers.

230 He used to bare his teeth in greed at the sight of a dinner;
now he merely gapes like a swallow's chick when its mother
alights with a beakful, going without herself. And yet,
worse than any physical loss is the mental decay
which cannot remember servants' names, nor the face of the
friend

with whom he dined the previous evening, nor even the children,
his very own, whom he raised himself. By a cruel will
he forbids his flesh and blood to inherit, and all his possessions
go to Phiale. So potent the breath of that artful mouth
which stood on sale for many years in the cell of a brothel.

240 Suppose his mind retains its vigor, he still must walk
in front of his children's coffins, and bear to gaze on the pyre
of his beloved wife or brother and on urns full of his sisters.
This is the price of longevity. As people age, the disasters
within their homes forever recur; grief follows grief;
their sorrows never cease, and their dress is the black of
mourning.

The king of Pylos, if you place any trust in mighty Homer,
stood for a life which was second only to that of a crow;
No doubt he was happy. Postponing death for three generations,
he began to count his years upon his right hand's fingers;

250 he drank new wine at many a harvest. But listen a little,
I urge you, to the bitter complaints which he makes at the laws of
fate

and his own protracted thread, as he watches the beard of the
valiant

Antilochus blazing, and appeals to all his friends who are there
to tell him why he should have survived to the present age,
and what crime he has committed to deserve so long a life.

Peleus did the same as he mourned the death of Achilles;
and so did the other, who rightly lamented the Ithacan swimmer.
Troy would still have been standing when Priam went down to
join

the shades of Assaracus—Cassandra and Polyxena, tearing their
garments,
260 would have led the ritual cries of lament, while Hector, along
with
his many brothers, would have shouldered the body and carried it
out
with magnificent pomp amid the tears of Ilium's daughters had
Priam died at an earlier time, a time when Paris
had not as yet begun to build his intrepid fleet.
Therefore what boon did his great age bring him? He lived to see
everything wrecked, and Asia sinking in flame and steel.
Then, removing his crown, he took arms, a doddering soldier,
and slumped by the altar of highest Jove like a worn-out ox,
which is scorned by the ungrateful plough after all its years of
service
270 and offers its scraggy pathetic neck to its master's blade.
His was at least the end of a human being; the wife
who survived him became a vicious bitch, snarling and barking.
I hasten on to our countrymen, passing over the king
of Pontus, and Croesus too, whom the righteous Solon exhorted
in eloquent words to watch the close of a long-run life.
Exile, prison walls, the dreary swamps of Minturnae,
begging for bread in the ruins of Carthage—it all resulted
from living too long. What could nature, what could Rome
have brought forth upon earth more blest than that famous man
if, after leading around the city his host of captives
280 and all the parade of war, he had breathed his last at the moment
of greatest glory, when poised to leave his Teutonic car?

With kindly foresight, Campania gave a desirable fever
to Pompey; however, the public prayers of numerous cities
prevailed; so Pompey's fortune and that of the capital saved
his life—but only to cut it off in defeat. Such mangling
Lentulus missed; Cethegus avoided that fate and was killed
without mutilation; Catiline lay with his corpse entire.

The last entry in Juvenal's catalog of the things that people wish for is beauty. A series of examples from Roman tradition highlights its perils. Lucretia was the wife of L. Tarquinius Collatinus, whose beauty attracted the last king's son, Sextus Tarquinius, which led to her rape and suicide. In the fifth century B.C., Verginia was killed by her father to prevent her from being taken by Appius Claudius. Nero tried to castrate a young man whom he fancied, so he could be his "bride." Examples from mythology are added to the list, such as Mars's risky escapade with Venus, Phaedra's fatal attraction to her stepson, Hippolytus, and Bellerophon, who was accused by his host's wife, Sthenoboea. The capstone example is the good-looking C. Silius, who was forced by the emperor Claudius's wife, Messalina, to go through a wedding ceremony with her.

When she passes Venus' temple, the anxious mother requests
290 beauty—in a quiet voice for her sons, more loudly for her
daughters,
going to fanciful lengths in her prayers. 'So I do,' she says.
'What's wrong with that? Latona delights in Diana's beauty.'
But Lucretia discourages people from praying for looks of the
kind
which she had herself. Verginia would welcome Rutila's hump
and bestow her own appearance on her. It's the same with a son;
if he possesses physical charm, his parents are always
in a state of wretched anxiety. For it's true that beauty and virtue

are rarely found together. Although he may come from a home
which instils pure habits and is just as strict as the Sabines of old,
300 although generous Nature may add with a kindly hand
the gift of an innocent heart and a face that burns with modest
blushes (what greater boon can a boy receive from Nature,
who has more authority than any caring parent or guardian?),
he is not allowed to become a man. A wealthy seducer
with brazen effrontery actually dares to approach the parents.
Such is the confidence placed in bribes. No *ugly* youngster
was ever castrated by a despot within his barbarous castle.
Nero would never rape a stripling with bandy legs
or scrofula, or one with a swollen belly and a crooked back.
310 I challenge you now to rejoice in your son's good looks! And
greater
hazards still are ahead. He'll become a lover at large;
then he will have to fear whatever reprisals a furious
husband may take. (He can hardly hope to have better luck
than the ill-starred Mars; he too will be caught in the net.)
Moreover,
such anger sometimes exacts more than is granted to anger
by any law. Thus one is cut down by a dagger, another
is cut up by a bloody whip; some make room for a mullet.
Your young Endymion will fall for a married lady and become
her lover. And then, once he has taken Servilia's cash,
320 he will do it to one for whom he cares nothing, stripping her
body
of all its jewelry. For what will any woman deny
to her clammy crotch? She may be an Oppia or a Catulla,

but when she's rotten, *that* is the center of all her conduct.

'What harm is beauty to one who is pure?' Ask rather what profit was gained by Hippolytus, or by Bellerophon, from his stern convictions.

She blushed with shame at the rebuff, as though despised for her looks;

Sthenoboea, too, was just as incensed as the woman of Crete.

They lashed themselves, both, to fury; a woman is at her most savage

when goaded to hatred by an injured pride.

Decide what advice

330 you think should be offered to the man whom Caesar's wife is determined

to marry. He's a fine fellow of excellent birth, and extremely handsome; but the luckless wretch is being swept to his death by Messalina's eyes. She has long been sitting there, all prepared in her flaming veil; a purple bed stands open to view in the grounds. A dowry of a million will be paid in the old ancestral

manner; a priest will come with people to witness the contract.

Perhaps you thought all this was a secret known to a few?

Not at all; she insists on a proper ceremony. State your decision.

Unless you're willing to obey her commands, you must die before dusk.

340 If you go through with the crime, there will be a respite until what is known to all and sundry reaches the emperor's ear.

He'll be the last to hear of his family's shame; in the meantime do what you're told, if you rate a few days' extra life

as highly as that. Whatever you judge to be the more easy
and better course, that fine white neck must bow to the sword.

*The much shorter conclusion points to what humans should pray for, health
of mind and body, while leaving it to the gods to order the rest of one's life.*

Is there nothing, then, that people should pray for? If you want
some advice,

you will let the heavenly powers themselves determine what
blessings

are most appropriate to us and best suit our condition;

for instead of what's pleasant, the gods will always provide
what's fitting.

350 They care more for man than he cares for himself; for we
are driven by the force of emotion, a blind overmastering
impulse,

when we yearn for marriage and a wife who will give us
children; the gods,

however, foresee what the wife and children are going to be like.

Still, that you may have something to ask for—some reason to
offer

the holy sausages and innards of a little white pig in a chapel you
ought to pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Ask for a valiant heart which has banished the fear of death,
which looks upon length of days as one of the least of nature's
gifts; which is able to suffer every kind of hardship,

360 is proof against anger, craves for nothing, and reckons the trials
and gruelling labors of Hercules as more desirable blessings
than the amorous ease and the banquets and cushions of
Sardanapallus.

The things that I recommend you can grant to yourself; it is
certain
that the tranquil life can only be reached by the path of goodness.
Lady Luck, if the truth were known, you possess no power;
it is we who make you a goddess and give you a place in heaven.

AFTERWORD

It appears that Juvenal was not a very popular author in his own time or in the years that followed. Not until the late fourth century do we find evidence that his satires were being read and studied. The most famous teacher of that era, Servius, quotes from Juvenal more than seventy times in his commentary on Virgil, which was well known to every self-respecting Roman schoolboy. From this period dates a commentary by an unknown author on Juvenal's works, too, which suggests that they were now being read by students and that there was thus a demand for scholarly explication of his very difficult Latin and the many topical allusions to people, customs, and events that had long since faded from memory. His biting moral aphorisms were particularly well suited to adaptation by Christian moralists and were to make him a revered author in the Middle Ages, but in late antiquity his audience was largely pagan. For the fourth-century Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus the taste for Juvenal among the aristocracy of Rome was a sign of decadence. "Some of them," he wrote, "hate learning as they do poison, and read with attentive care only Juvenal and Marius Maximus [an imperial biographer of the third century A.D.], in their boundless idleness handling no other books than these, for what reason it is not for my humble mind to judge."

With the revival of interest in classical literature in the ninth century that accompanied the reign of Charlemagne in western Europe, Juvenal was again an object of study. Remigius (ca. 841–908), a Benedictine monk who taught for many years at the Abbey of St. Germain in Auxerre, in Burgundy, compiled a commentary on Juvenal, drawing on the notes of his teacher, Heiric. This work formed the basis for a vast body of interpretive

work on Juvenal beginning in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a period when his popularity skyrocketed. Not that Juvenal escaped suspicion any more than other classical authors. When, in eleventh-century Ravenna, the grammarian Vilgardus was accused of heresy for promoting the classical poets, he claimed that he had been misled by demons who took the form not only of Virgil and Horace, but of Juvenal as well. More than five hundred manuscripts of Juvenal's works survive from the later Middle Ages, many of them with their margins filled with notes by students and scholars alike. Medieval authors such as the twelfth-century poet Joseph of Exeter imitated his forms of expression, and many others drew on his works for the pithy epigrams for which Juvenal is still famous today. He was well known to Petrarch (1304–74) and Boccaccio (1313–75), and Chaucer could assume that his readers would recognize an allusion to the opening of the Tenth Satire on the folly of human desires (*Troilus and Criseyde* IV 197–201):

O Juvenal, lord, trewe is they sentence,
That litel wyten folk what is to yerne,
That they ne fynde in hire desir offence;
For cloude of errour let hem to discerne
What best is.

And, in the full assurance that her audience will recognize the reference, Chaucer's Wife of Bath can quote from the same satire on the subject of poverty (*Canterbury Tales* III 1192–94):

Juvenal seith of peverte myrily:
'The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,
Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'

The saying was one of many from Juvenal that had by then achieved the status of a commonplace.

In the Renaissance the satires proved a magnet for humanists eager to demonstrate their exegetical prowess by explaining Juvenal's difficult Latin and topical allusions to people and events in ancient Rome. Scholarly interest intensified after the appearance of the first printed edition in 1470, attracting such great names in the history of Italian humanism as Domizio Calderini (ca. 1444–78), who modestly remarked in the preface to his commentary (1474), "without arrogance," as he put it, that he had

explained a great deal that his predecessors had overlooked. Such pronouncements were routine in the competition among humanists over classical authors, and Calderini attracted scolding criticism from Giorgio Merula (1430–94), whose own commentary appeared a few years later in 1478, and Angelo Poliziano (1454–94), whose commentaries on Juvenal from approximately 1485 are preserved in the notes of his students. All of this scholarly activity laid the groundwork for the dissemination of Juvenal's works among the reading public and also served to maintain their place in the curricula of the schools. In popular literature Juvenal's tenth poem on the folly of human wishes was a model for part of the German moralist Sebastian Brant's (1457–1521) allegorical satire, *The Ship of Fools* (1494). In Brant's work, written in vernacular German, 110 people board ship to search for a fool's paradise, which forms the frame for Brant's exposure of the follies of contemporary religious, social, and political life. This is the earliest instance of Juvenalian satire adapted to current conditions through literary imitation.

Juvenal had been translated into several other languages before the first English version appeared in 1644, when Sir Robert Stapylton (1607–69) published *The First Six Satyrs of Juvenal*. A complete translation followed in 1647, and from that time on, Juvenal exercised a powerful influence on the English literary imagination. Stapylton presented Juvenal as a study in the manners of men and followed the Latin very closely in his translation: "I have for my Country's sake taught him our Language, which if you allow him to speake intelligibly and profitably, you may please to naturalize him by your Votes." It was left to greater literary lights to adapt Juvenal's voice to English poetic language. In 1693, John Dryden produced a translation of Juvenal by several hands to which he contributed his own versions of five satires, including the sixth, Juvenal's virulent denunciation of female vice, which caused (and still causes) Juvenal's translators some embarrassment. As Dryden puts it, with chauvinistic gentility, in his preface to the poem:

In his other satires, the poet has only glanced on some particular women, and generally scourged the men; but this he reserved wholly for the ladies. How they had offended him, I know not; but, upon the whole matter, he is not to be excused for imputing to all the vices of some few amongst them. Neither was it generously done of him to attack the weakest,

as well as the fairest part of the creation; neither do I know what moral he could reasonably draw from it.

Among the many imitations of Juvenal in this period, by the likes of Boileau (1636–1711) and Alexander Pope (1688–1744), pride of place is held by two poems by Samuel Johnson (1709–84). His initial creative success was scored with “London: A Poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal,” first published anonymously in 1738. The model is Juvenal’s denunciation of life in the city of Rome, for which Johnson substitutes contemporary London:

The cheated Nation’s happy Fav’rites see!
Mark whom the Great caress, who frown on me!
London! the needy Villain’s gen’ral Home,
The Common Shore of Paris and of Rome;
With eager Thirst, by Folly or by Fate,
Sucks in the Dregs of each corrupted State.

Johnson’s poem perfectly exemplifies the approach to imitation described by his predecessor Dryden in the preface to his translation of Ovid’s *Heroides*, in which a later poet endeavors “to write like one who has written before him on the same Subject: that is, not to Translate his words, or to be Confined to his Sense, but only to set him as a Pattern, and to write, as he supposes, that Authour would have done, had he lived in our Age, and in our Country.” Johnson had so fully absorbed the matter and manner of Juvenal’s satires that he composed his other, more famous imitation, “The Vanity of Human Wishes, the Tenth Satire of Juvenal Imitated,” in his head while walking the streets of London.

The earliest translation of Juvenal to appear in print in the United States was by the future president John Quincy Adams, a verse rendition of the thirteenth satire written while he was serving as minister in Berlin. It was published in the first issue of a new journal, *Port Folio*, in 1801, by a friend of the family who had acquired it from Adams’s brother, and it was printed anonymously, although Adams’s authorship soon became known. With Adams’s permission the same journal printed in 1805 his translation of Juvenal’s seventh satire on the low status of art and education, because he thought it particularly applicable to American society. In his preface he writes, “neither the remoteness of the age, nor the differences of manners

and institutions, under which this manifesto of the Muses, against the treatment which they experienced, was issued, can disguise or conceal the pointed application of their complaints to these happy times, and this genial clime.” Since then Juvenal has receded in the popular imagination, an unfortunate consequence of the fact that society’s moralizing bent now employs other outlets than verse satire.